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Clever Chinese Smugglers

Hongkong Secret Service Man Tells How Opium Is Concealed So As To Pass The Customs || Men---Shrewd Advertising Scheme

HONGKONG, August 5.—With the suppression of the regular opium traffic in China, smugglers look for the extended development of an active industry by illicit ways. Persia opium will be the chief supply, for Persia is increasing the growth of the poppy as fast as India is reducing it.

"For ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain the beathen Chinese is indeed peculiar, and in nothing is this more clearly demonstrated than in opium smuggling. But the Ah Sin who couldn't find a better place than his sleeve to conceal his contraband opium he would have almost shifted as a smuggler. 'Gold is where you find it,' as the old prospectors say, 'and even then it isn't always there.' The same might be said by the searcher for smuggled opium."

Thus spoke a member of the Hongkong Secret Service at Macao. Owing to the absolute prohibition of the importation of the drug into America, smuggling into the Pacific ports has increased tremendously.

"We always look for it where we least expect to find it," he continued, "but our usual find is only the place that it occupied. All these coastal steamers are burrowed as full of holes to hide opium in as an old teredo-eaten pile. We know these nooks and crannies and cozy corners as well as the Chinks who made them, and when we're tipped off that contraband opium is going by a certain steamer, of course we go off and rake her with a fine tooth comb."

Experts in Concealment.

"Ninety-nine times out of a hundred no opium. Then, perhaps, the Chinkees get in a row over fan-tan on a run to Swatow, and there officers get word from an 'unknown friend' that it might interest them to look behind—say, the third panel aft the first starboard cabin port. Result—100 pounds or more of thin, bright fins of opium, and a lot of protestingly innocent Chinese. Do you think that we missed that particular cubby hole? Don't believe it. We didn't miss a square inch of honey-combing on the old hulk; but by the same sleight-of-hand work that nearly always beats us, they managed to pass it around from one place to another while we were on the search."

"I told what I had heard of the cleverness of the customs officials of San Francisco and Seattle; of how cans of opium had been fished out of the water floating to a fisherman's buoy; how it had been found under the mattress of an unsuspecting captain who, up to the moment of its discovery, was threatening to have the inspectors discharged for daring to search his cabin; of how opium had been found concealed in the jewel boxes of the companionways. In eggs, in sacks of flour and in bolts of silk."

"Speaking of silk and opium," said the detective, "there was rather an amusing incident occurred at Amoy last year. A merchant of that city was importing flowered silk from Canton, via Hongkong, and in one of his shipments, to his great surprise, inside of a couple of dozen of the bolts he found long, flattened cylinders of tin

filled with opium, around which was wound just enough silk to cover them. The contraband drug aggregated several thousand dollars in value. Evidently in some manner confusion had arisen among the smugglers as to which bolts contained the opium, and the wrong ones had been taken to the merchant.

Concealed in Clocks.

"But that was nothing to the smuggling 'machine' they had rigged up on Pittsburg Post.

a couple of Chinese steamers that ran down to Saigon and Bangkok a few years ago. A 'public spirited' Chinese merchant of the French port made the steamship company an offer to install clocks in all the saloons, smoking-rooms, and even in the staterooms, if in return he was allowed to place an advertisement of his firm of rice and sugar importers upon their dials. Whether the company 'stood in' or not we never found out, but, at any rate, the offer was accepted. The advertisement on the face of the clocks was sufficient excuse for the presence of the clocks, even in the staterooms, and the fact that the clocks in even the second-class cabins were large enough for hotel offices was remarked merely as a piece of mingled Oriental enterprise and eccentricity.

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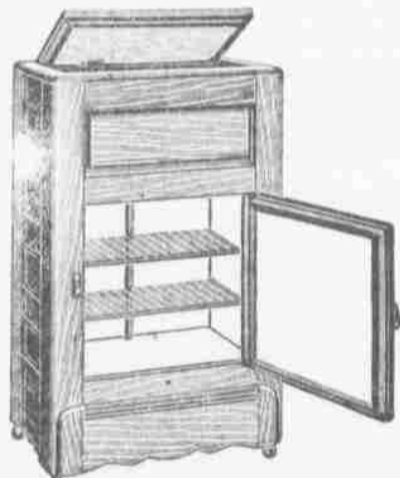
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